Depot Town Rag

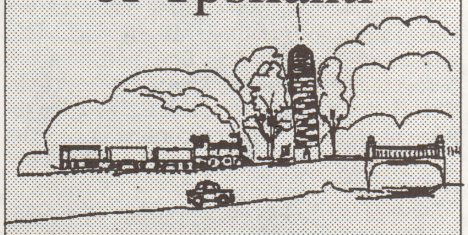
Volume 16, Number 9 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

100% FREE Rag Content
September 1993

- Street vendors' cries
- **Heritage Jazz program**
- Directory/Map
- Music remembered
- and other strictly local stuff. . . .

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Sing a song of Ypsilanti



The following poem was found on the bulletin board at The Daily Grind and is reprinted here with the author's permission. It seemed to say much about this old town and the relationship of the college and the depot and helps to set the theme for our September issue:

A saintly little towne
in Michigan's palm,
Oh! how could I leave you
Ypsilanti?
Of olde brick works
and aged elms
and that Depot's history.
Thought I to leave thee Ypsilanti?
Where my heart has entwined your olde library
and water tower near olde normal.
Olde saintly town in Michigan's plam,
how I love thee Ypsilanti!
A saintly little place
and my love has been for thee
as the past now fading,
of my recollection, does not last
as your history.
Demetrious, you would love this olde face.
Now spliced by roadways
and they pass unconscious of your
wonderful olde ways.
The river draws through you a heart
of character and old bridges.
But, your grace survives somehow
this changing pace.
In the palm of a wonderland,
I dare stand at the edge of day
and view from a secret place,
of another time when gaslight
and clomping hooves did carriage roll,
and smokey stacks up on olde roof tops
and smokey trains a time ago.
Olde sleepy little towne, in Michigan's palm
yes how I love thee Ypsilanti.

- Louie Kennedy, 1992

'Town & Gown' takes new meaning

EMU & DEPOT TOWN

Most of today's college kids wouldn't be caught dead in a 'back to school' outfit that mom helped them pick out at the local J.C.Penney's, but they seem awfully comfortable in their wash 'n' wears and old, ripped jeans at the Farmers' Market down in Depot Town on Saturday mornings.

All that has changed since the earliest days of the 'Town and Gown' relationship between the Normal School and Ypsi's Railroad District. When early Michigan families sent their smartest daughters on the train to get their ninety-day teaching certificates at the Michigan Normal School, they warned them not to dilly-dally in that demonized district. Saloons, single men and coarse language dominated the activity between trains and, if these young ladies were to become school marms in the territory's one-room school houses, they had to be sheltered from that kind of roughness. Contrast that to the letters to the editor which are printed about local boards of education lately. Who's going to shelter us from that?

Today's headlines indicate that perhaps it is the preservationists down at the depot who need sheltering from the college kids. Maybe it's because they turned it into a Big State University with a giant football field and all; maybe it's just the way the news media handle it, but this generation of Depot Towners has found that this generation of college students can get along just fine. We've calmed down a little and they've become more worldly. It seems a perfect combination.

Cynics often wonder if today's college clientele can really enjoy a place as corny as Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town. Many of them have grown up in places like Livonia, Sterling Heights or Farmington Hills or came from locales - not towns - that were perfectly square on the map. Demographers predict that, by the time these kids complete graduate school, every American will have his or her own private shopping mall!

That's just a tad frightening for today's college student, and us folks down the hill can help get them ready for alternatives to that world of commercialism.

Recent history has shown that EMU folks find a certain uniqueness down here that they can identify with: the best housing values, most traditional meals, friendliest taverns, freshest fruits and vegetables and even credits for some of their most practical courses can be discovered in the old railroad district. Why, it's almost enough to make you want to go back to school again.

Almost.

EMU events announced, Depot Town invited to get on board

[Gerri Ann Beaugrand, of the EMU Parents Association enthusaistically invites Depot Towners to join in the fun on campus this fall. An extra run of the October *Depot Town Rag* will be circulated throughout the campus, as well.]

"Fall brings with it beautiful colors, big time shopping sprees, school start-ups and lots of athletic and academic activities that go along with it. Not to be out-done, Eastern Michigan University will be loaded with all kinds of activities on campus this fall and we would like to extend this invitation to you to come on over and see what we are all about!

"The festivities begin with football. Combining the home game nights and days with other terrific activities will make this an exciting and fun filled season we know you won't forget.

"The excitement begins on September 6 at 7:30 p.m. under the lights when we meet **Temple University.** You know that's Bill Cosby's alma mater and the first time we have played that team.

"Then **Western Illinois** will meet Eastern on September 18 at 6:00 pm. To make the evening even more exciting we will have a very impressive display of bands as this is our official **"Band Day".** There will be all kinds of excitement generated by the great music an d hundreds of people.

"With a great **Homecoming Parade** starting the day off at 2:00 p.m., Eastern's football team will meet **Kent State** at 6:00 pm. on October 9 with the crowning of our Homecoming King and Queen at half time.

"You'll have to see it to believe it because on October 23 from 11 a.m. to Who Knows When? You will be treated to the biggest and best

[concluded on page two]

DEPOT TOWN

T-shirt debuts at Heritage Jazz Competiton

Watch for the district's newest collector's item as this year's design is applied to hundreds of chests in the jazz tent. Playing with the highly recognizable logotype from the west wall of the historic Follett House, the shirt design was assembled by DTA's Pam Hamblin with the cooperation of Elmo's Supershirt in Ann Arbor. It's one in a long line of local booster projects created for Depot Town by Elmo Morales and will find its way to the shirt drawer of a host of local boosters.

Offered in sizes up to XXXL, the shirts have changed since the district's earlier promotions. Seems the neighborhood's success has gone to our waists!

They will sell for $12 each.

[EMU's fall events concluded]

FAMILY DAY you'd ever want to attend. We will have fantastic programs on the main campus and at Rynearson Stadium, including hands-on demonstrations from various departments, a "Magical" Chemistry Show, Diving Exhibition in our Olympic pool, a terrific theater performance at Quirk Theater, a Youth Learning Fair at Rynearson and more than a dozen other great activities for the whole family. There will be something for everyone; from the little guy to grandpa and grandma, and best of all, the programs are all free that day! The football game will begin at 6 p.m. and is against **Western Michigan University.** Anyone 14 and under is admitted free! What more could you ask? Be sure to bring the whole family to Eastern's campus that day and have the time of your life!

"To change the flare a bit, we will be playing an afternoon game against **Ball State** at 1 p.m. on October 30. If you've attended the other games, you wouldn't want to miss this one - and if you haven't, you'll sure want to get there before all the fun is over.

"To finish off the season we will be playing **Ohio** at 1 p.m. on November 13. There will be lots of good food and beverages available for sale at our food vending booths to help keep you warm and cozy, so don't let the cold keep you away."

[**Editor's note:** The October issue of *The Depot Town Rag* will be expanded to cover the campus, dorms, and parents group. *Rag* sponsors may wish announce special offers for that venue in the next issue. Deadline for new copy is Friday, 10 September via the mail slot in the caboose and new spaces will be available at $10 per column inch.]

The Heritage Jazz Competition

Authentic, Fun & Free
August 20, 21, 22
down in Depot Town!

Friday, August 20

4 p.m.	**Sean Dobbins Quartet**
5:15 p.m.	**Got it Goin' On**
6:30 p.m.	**Broad Impact**
7:45 p.m.	**Jazz Quintessence**
9 p.m.	**Surrogate Earth**
10:15 p.m.	**The Blues Desciples**, a

romping Motor City musical review featuring classic R&B tunes performed by a sterling band led by ultra-smooth guitarist Paul Carey and fronted by two powerful vocalists - Camille Price and Terry Thunder.

While this group has loads of experinece in contemporary music, they treasure classic swing and jump blues. Members of the band have worked with Earl King, Hubert Sumlin, Johnny Adams, Fenton Robinson, Martha and the Vandellas, The Drifters, Bo Diddley, Otis Rush, Cornell Dupreee, Pinetop Perkins and many others.

Paul Carey's fellow blues converts are converts Bob Conner, drummer R. J. Spanler, saxophonist "Showtime" Johnny Evans and trumpeter Kurt Behuhn. If the infectious rhythm of this band doesn't make you a convert, the vocalists will. Terry Thunder is at least six-foot-four with a giant grin and a voice to match. Sultry Camille Price - who might be all of five-foot-two - croons and shouts in a style reminiscent of Esther Phillips and Dinah Washington. You must see this band and these two singers.

Saturday, August 21

12 noon	**Randy Napoleon Quintet**
1:15 p.m.	**Kenn Thomas Duo**
2:10 pm.	**Vibraharp**
3:05 p.m.	**Gerald Ross**
4:05 p.m.	**Confirmation**
5:20 p.m.	**Randy Napoleon/ Andy Filisko Duo**
6:20 p.m.	**Fats Dynamite**
7:35 p.m.	**The Uncalled Four**
8:50 pm.	**5900 2nd Street**
10:05 p.m.	**The Eastside Blues**

Jumpers - Aptly titled, this band of east side Detroiters does jump! Drummer R.J. Spangler, a founding member of the Sun Messngers, has mined the wealth of blues talent in Detroit's east side and has come up with a gem of a band. RJ's flawless timekeeping and rock-bottom swing set the standard for the rest of the bandmates who are his equal.

Johnnie Bassett is featured on guitar and vocals. Bassett was the staff session guitarist for Fortune Records in the '50s and early '60s. His smooth licks, searing blue notes and insistent beat paved the way for theMotown style of the later '60s.

Also "jumping the blues" will be bassist Bub Conner, pianist Henry Gleedon, trumpeter and vocalist Kurt Beguhn, tenor saxophonist Danny White and alto saxophonist Keith Kaminiski.

Sunday, August 22

Noon until 3:30 pm.

The winning ensembles:

- **Outstanding solo performer or duet**
- **Outstanding small group (trio or quartet)**
- **Outstanding large group (five or larger)**
- **Outstanding vocalist**

Performance times to be announced

4-6:00 p.m. **Steve Nardella,** one of Ypsilanti's best kept secrets, will wrap up the jazz and blues tent on a high and blue note. Steve leads on guitar, harmonica and vocals and works with two powerful sidemen: bassist Dave Picard and drummer Mike Kissick. This will be one of the trio's final performances before they go to Europe for a three-week tour. This performance also coincides with the release of Naradella's first recording in 12 years - "Daddy Rollin' Stone" - on the Schoolkids' Record Label.

Steve Nardella has been playing in the Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor/Detroit area for over 20 years. He was initially drawn to the area to attend the 1970 Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. Nardella's fiarst recorded work here was as a member of the Boogie Brothers which can be heard on the Atlantic recording of the 1972 Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festival. After the Boogie Brothers, Steve was a member of The Silvertones, The Vipers and led The Steve Nardella Band. He made two albums for Blind Pig Records.

Steve understands the virtues of inspired primitivism. He goes for feeling rather than technique. His performance is charged with physicality, soulfulness and raw energy. He draws on the sultry blues of the deep south and his inexhaustive study of the blues tradition. Nardella is indeed one of Ypsilanti's finest. The Heritage Jazz Competition is proud to spotlight this unique musician who deserves wider recognition in his adopted home town.

The 1993 Heritage Jazz Competition is produced by WEMU's Linda Yohn, and underwritten by the radio station, the Depot Town Assocation, the Ypsilanti Visitors and Convention Bureau and Carty's Music.

In addition to a stipend to each performing group, awards to winning musical groups include gift certificates from Carty's Music and the Depot Town Association, an engagement through EMU's Office of Campus Life and a gift certificate from Nalli's Music. Additional awards will be announced from the stage.

Each day's final performance is a separate, paid gig for the day's non-competitive headliner, creating one of the most elegant places for Festival-goers to sit and enjoy thelmselves during the frenetic activity of this popular local holiday. The Heritage Jazz Competition continues to be a totally free attraction of the Festival made possible, in part by the sale of refreshments in the performance area.

Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town

1993 DIRECTORY

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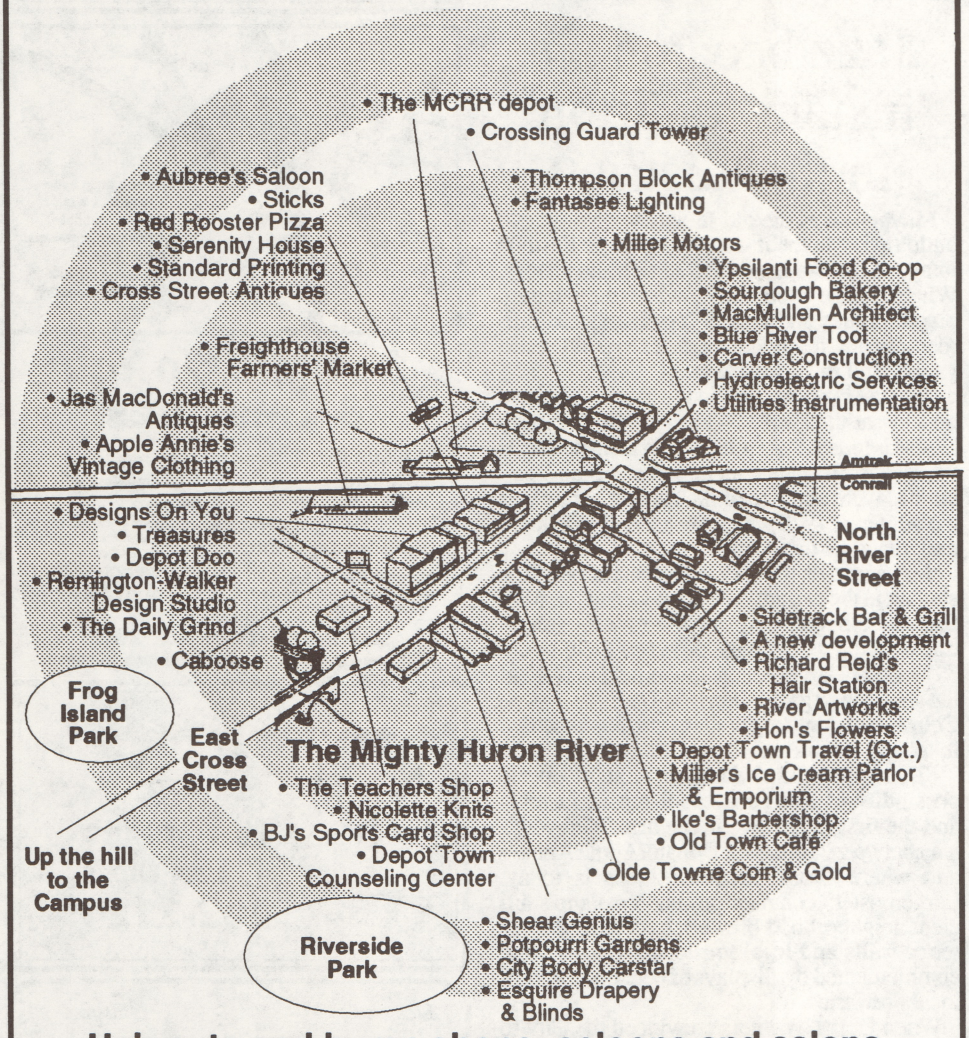

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Depot Town Association, Inc., 12 August 1993

DTA: Firmly rooted in the past - with a clear view forward!

August's meeting was held a week early to avoid conflict with Heritage Festival events. More than thirty people showed up at the Old Town Café to show concern for a change in the posted parking hours.

Arbor Building Company's **Ettore Paolucci,** who is constructing the new house on East Cross street, was a guest at the meeting.

July's minutes were read and approved as published.

The treasury holds a bit under $4000 with $2800 paid out for Heritage Jazz Competition insurance, expenses for *The Rag* and T-shirt production. $480 still remains due from the Frog Island program book ads.

President Blackmer announced that the floor was open to suggestions, proposals and feelings about **on-street parking,** encouraging the group to make a formal suggestion to the Downtown Development Authority which would then take it to City Hall for implementation. The unusually high turn-out of business and building owners for this decison was much appreciated by the officers and board.

After much rational and thoughtful dialog, it was decided to post "No Parking from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m." to allow for street cleaning, snow removal and conform to the necessary businesses hours served by those parking areas.

The 'singleton' sign in front of City Body Carstar will remain the same.

Any expenses incurred by the change in signage will be addressed at the next meeting.

Richard Robine offered overnight parking to John Underwood, the only owner/resident who has been unable to find other than on-street parking for his private vehicle.

The editor offered the **monthly sermon** regarding the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail: Although America's pioneers are often characterized as 'rugged individualists,' they were, in fact, highly creative cooperative community members, working for a common good for the entire group. Then the meeting got back to making decisions for the district.

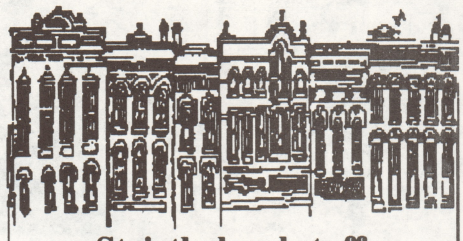
Heritage Festival: Tower Records will co-sponsor the Jazz Competition along with DTA and WEMU. The jazz tent still needs volunteers to act as hosts at the gate each evening until midnight.

Dave Blackmer has **daily parking passes** for merchants during Heritage Festival.

Pam Hamblin reported the new Depot Town **T-shirts** will be ready before festival and will sell for $12 at a modest profit for a three-color print job. The first ten dozen will concentrate on 'adult' sizes specializing in XXL and XXXL. A few *tiny* sizes will be offered, as well. Available at the jazz tent, the design emulates the district's logo on the west wall of the Follett House.

Dave Blackmer announced that **EMU Parents Association busses** will tour Ypsilanti in October with regular stops in Depot Town. A special run of the October *Rag* will feature back-to-school items of interest to that group and will be distributed on campus and in hospitality bags on the tour busses. Local merchants may wish to offer specials in that issue to introduce their services to a totally new clientele of parents and students.

As usual, the business fit the space allowed.



Strictly local stuff:
September1993

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association
7:30 p.m. Thursday, 16th
at the Old Caboose

Depot Town
Antique Engine Club
7:30 pm Thursday, 23rd
at the Freighthouse

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
David Blackmer, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

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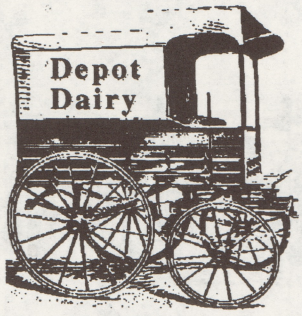

Everyday Life in Depot Town in the nineteenth century

Street vendors' cries added their own kind of music to the old neighborhood

Some right-thinking city councilmembers must have passed the current ordinances which forbid street vendors (push carts) in Ypsilanti and much is lost by it. Only at Heritage Festival time do we see merchants hustling their wares in front of shops on the sidewalks -- but not often on push carts, in these recent incarnations.

In historic Ypsilanti and most other burgeoning metropoli, street vendors hawked a wide variety of goods and services. Among them: oysters (hugely popular), milk, bottled water (the quality of city water was highly suspect before the advent of municipal water works), hot corn, muffins, pies, peanuts, cider, cheese, chestnuts, chickens, fish, honeycombs, pocketbooks, suspenders, socks, gloves, newspapers, boot-blacking, blade-sharpening, etc.

"Little girls are numerous among the street vendors. They sell matches, tooth-picks, cigars, newspapers, songs and flowers. The flower girls are hideous little creatures, but their wares are beautiful and command a ready sale. These are made into hand bouquets, and buttonhole bouquets, and commend from ten cents to several dollars each." - James McCabe, *Lights and Shadows of New York Life*.

Ypsilanti's flower girls were less mercenary; at least that's the way they are remembered by folks who never met them. Legend has it that the ??? sisters *gave away* their flowers at the depot. And they must have been much prettier than those described by McCabe in New York at that time! Much prettier!

Not only are their products missed, but the sounds of the vendors which once echoed the neighborhood are gone forever. Today's streets reverberate with compact disc recordings sung by people we only know from television tapes played *ad infinitum*. But it wasn't always so.

Imagine the cries of push cart vendors and skilled craftsfolk at the corners of River and Cross Streets today. It might be a great improvement over the pick-up truck-mounted boom-boxes:

Blade sharpening: This vendor set up a portable grinder on the street and cried, "Scissors to grind!" or "Razors, Scissors, Penknives to Grind!" while tinkling a little bell.

Charcoal: Sold for thirty-five cents a barrel in Philadelphia in 1850, it may have been cheaper in Ypsi due to our nearness to the narrow gauge rail lines out of the northern forests. The charcoal was used to start fires and was loudly hawked on the streets, with the cry of "Charcoal by the bushel, Charcoal by the peck, Charcoal by the frying pan, Or any way you lek!" In Philadelphia, the charcoal man blew a loud horn until 1835; a bell was then used to satisy a city ordinance concerning noise.

Fish: Fishmongers with carts shouted various poems: "Fresh fish fit for the pan," or "Shad! Buy any shad?" or "Here comes the fishman! Bring out your dishpan, Porgies at five cents a pound!" The hawking was sometimes interjected by the blowing of a tin horn, which came to be known as a fish horn.

Fruits and berries: In all the major cities, when in season, fruits and berries were hawked with the cry "Raaaaaaaas berrrrrries! Blaaaaaaaaackberrrrrries! Apples! Fresh apples!" or "Peaches here!" Ironically, today's berry pickers simply sit at their stalls in the Farmers' Market and await our enthusiastic discovery of their much-awaited treasures. When today's berries are in season, it's the consumers who do the singing! Any vendor showing that kind of enthusaism is usually given 'the fish eye' by all within earshot. Too bad, huh?

Hot corn: Often sold by women and girls. One popular cry was, "Hot corn! Hot corn! 'Ere's yer lily-white hot corn!" Another went, "Here's your nice hot corn! Smoking hot! Piping hot! O, what beauties I have got!"

Milk: Sold early in the morning on city streets, with cries of "Milk! Fresh milk!"

Newspapers: Hawked by boys with loud announcements, such as these heard in New York around 1868: "'Ere's your 'Erald!" "Mornin' Times!" "Buy a Tribune!" "Mail!" "Express!" "Telegram!" "Post!" Along with: "'Nuther murder!" "Tremendous sensation!" "Orful shootin' scrape!" "'Orrible accident!" and so on. *The Rag's* editor is sometimes known to circulate the block crying, "All the news in one month in one block!" but, then, it's a give-away paper.

Pepperpot: Negro women hawked kettles of this stew from carts in Philadelphia, with shouts of, "Pepperpot, right hot!" or "All hot! All hot! Makee back strong! Makee live long! Come buy my pepper pot!"

Sweet potatoes: The call of one Philadelphia vendor in the first half of the century went: "My hoss is blind and he's got no tail, When he's put in prison I'll go his bail. Yeddy go, sweet potatoes, oh! Fif-en-ny bit a half peck!"

Wood: Sold in the fall with cries of, "Wud! Wud! Wud! Wud!"

Let's all sing on the streets again!

"Dance and dress just like a gypsy, in the charming part of Ypsi. . . "

Today's streets seem calm - if not dull - by comparison. An occasional ice cream truck trundles by in summer afternoons, but the music is both mechanical and maniacal. The closest thing we can get to a true street vendor is when some of our neighbors bring their patio cookers on the sidewalks for Victorian Holiday in November and give away roasted chestnuts. If they sold them, they'd probably be arrested for solicitation in violation of the push cart ordinance!

Heritage Festival sometimes sees intinerant vendors 'hawking' their wares on the sidewalk, but The Committee usually puts a stop to that. Only 'Perferfer Malarkey' seems able to circumvent the recent rules against such promotion, when he issues his medicine show mahem in front of the historic Follett House. After all, his pitch is historical. He researched it at Greenfield Village, so it's official and approved by all officialdom in our thoroughtly modern epoch of commercialdom.

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A Depot Town SAMPLER

Jazz became an 'instant tradition' in this district

Maybe it was the old Italianate commercial buildings. Maybe it was the Heritage Festival image of celebrating local tradition and history. Whatever the motivation, when they started playing blues and jazz in Ypsilanti's old railroad district, it felt like the front row at Preservation Hall in New Orleans.

The first jazz concerts in the block were held upstairs at the Eagles' Club - where Serentity House is today. Jazz artists from Detroit shared the makeshift stage with members of the Ypsilanti Players and one of the earliest series was the winter of 1978 when weekend appearances took place all that winter.

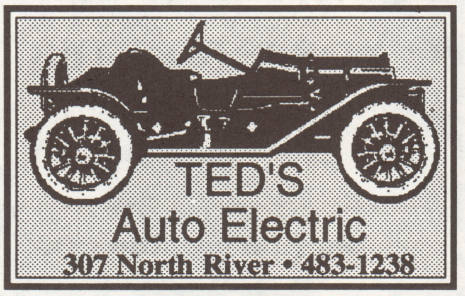
Next summer the II-V-I Orchestra played a concert in the parking lot backing up to the Alibi Bar and stopped only for the roaring freight trains which would have drowned them out.

The first Festival beer tent was held in front of the abandoned gas station (today's Olde Towne Coin & Gold) and a few street musicians settled in to sing and strum.

That sidewalk celebration brought up the possibility of regular outdoor musical events and the first took place in the dirt-filled walkway between James MacDonald/Apple Annie's and where Cross Street Antiques is today. Large posters commemorating Ypsilanti's ancient neighborhood breweries adorned the exterior walls and local musicians' efforts were complemented by displays of beer bottles from local breweries.

When Depot Towners convinced the City to wrest control of the boarded-up freighthouse from Conrail, that too was seen as a possible venue for musical performances. After all, it was six times larger than New Orleans' famed concert hall. Maybe the audience would be, too!?

Since then, jazz has moved from the streets to the Freighthouse to the parks and back to the streets. Instant traditions work well here.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